

# 'Town-on-the-Passaick'

THE anniversary of Newark's founding has been celebrated since 1886 on May 17 though no one is really certain whether that or May 20 was the day when the first party of Connecticut settlers landed here. The date of the first entry in the town minutes made by the recorder, Captain Robert Treat, was May 21, 1666. In either case, today is an appropriate time to consider how Newark got its name, and what sort of men the founders were.

Perhaps we shall never really know the truth about the naming of Newark. The first mention of it in the town minutes was in the fundamental agreements signed on June 24, 1667. Until that time the minutes refer to the place as "Our town on Passaick River," but in a book of that period, "Scots' Model of the Government of East New Jersey," it seems that the settlement was first called Milford, the name of the Connecticut town from which the first group of settlers came. It was originally planned to establish four towns, one for each group of settlers from Milford, Branford, Guilford and New Haven. But when all had arrived and the drawing for the home lots had been held, they formed one town, the neighbors from each of the four communities

## Anniversary Month of Newark's Founding Recalls Events Leading To Naming of City by Settlers

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occupying a different quarter at the Four Corners.

There is a tradition, well known to this day, that Newark received its name in honor of the Rev. Abraham Pierson, the leader of the settlers from Branford, who is said to have preached in the parish church at Newark-on-the-Trent in England. The first mention of this tradition is in the "Century Sermon" which the Rev. Alexander McWhorter preached in Newark's Old First Church on January 1, 1801. Pastor McWhorter says of Mr. Pierson, his predecessor at Old First Church: "It is said that he was Episcopally ordained in the town or neighborhood of Newark in South Britain, which perhaps might have originally suggested the name of this town." Pastor McWhorter declares, with characteristic modesty and honesty: "I possess no documents or written materials whence even these hints are derived except what have been taken from the relations

of old people to me in former times, therefore, it must not be expected that they will be accurate."

THE second reference to the town being named in honor of Mr. Pierson is in another history of Old First Church, the "Historical Discourses" of the Rev. Jonathan P. Stearns, given as a series of sermons about 1853. He says that "the name of the town was changed from Milford to Newark, in honor, it is supposed, of its first minister, who preached for a time in Newark, in England, before he came to this country. Its etymology is New-Work, not Newark, as some have supposed the former being a simple English translation of the Latin words Novum Opus, by which the founder of Newark Castle chose to distinguish his then new enterprise."

As a matter of fact the name New-Work is almost certainly older than the 12th Century Norman castle at Newark-on-Trent. When the Angles and Saxons invaded Britain, they destroyed the towns and fortifications of the Roman conquerors, and built their own crude dwellings upon the ruins. Several of the early Anglo-Saxon settlements bore the name of "Oldwork" or "Old Work" referring to the ancient Roman walls and foundations; several others were given the name of New-Work or, as it was variously spelled, Nieweorce, Newerc, and Newerch.



This bronze statue of Abraham Pierson, one of Yale's founders, is on campus.

By the time that the Rev. Abraham Pierson was ordained as Deacon in 1632 in the Collegiate Church at Southwell, seven miles from Newark, the famous old castle by the River Trent had become the property of the Crown. King John died in Newark castle, in 1216, worn and sick at heart after the barons had wrested the Magna Charta from him. Intensely loyal to King Charles and the Cavaliers, the town of Newark suffered a long siege in 1646 at the hands of a Scotch army aiding Cromwell in the Civil War. By this time Abraham Pierson had become a non-conformist and had left for New England; he was admitted to membership in the Congregational Church in Boston in 1640.



Memorial Bridge over Wopowaug River with its Robert Treat tower were erected for Milford's 250th anniversary in 1889. Indian head is that of chief who signed Milford Land Purchase deed. His name and mark are on stone opposite memorial tablet honoring Treat's thirty years in office.



Rev. Abraham Pierson, as Indian missionary, published a catechism with the help of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England. The New York Public Library owns the only known original in the U. S., from which the above page was reproduced. Another is in the British Museum.





Highlight of city's 250th anniversary celebration in 1914 was this scene from pageant on specially dug lagoon in Weequahic Park showing New Yorkers waving farewell to Robert Treat as he left for Connecticut.

THERE is definite proof of his ordination at Southwell but nothing to prove the statement by Mr. Stearns, or by Mr. Whitehead, for many years secretary of the New Jersey Historical Society, that he preached at Newark-on-Trent. Preaching first at Lynn, Mass., then at Southhampton, L. I., of which he was a founder, he took his congregation with him to Branford, Conn., then to Newark because of his intense conviction that none should be voters and landowners except the members of the church.

It must not be thought that Robert Treat and Abraham Pierson, being men of strong convictions, were stern and uncompromising in their daily life. Both men were far from the current stereotype of the sour-faced Puritan. Alexander McWhorter refers to Abraham Pierson's wisdom, his meekness, his prudence, his patience, and his discretion. No one can read the town minutes of Newark without being struck by the strong affection of the people of Newark for their aging pastor and by their constant concern for his comfort and welfare. The deep grief of his parishioners at his death

in 1678 is expressed in letters to Connecticut relatives.

Robert Treat was likewise a person of great prudence; he was a heroic soldier and a most resourceful man. Though he had a strong sense of humor, he was apparently as shy with women as Captain Miles Standish, for Jane Tapp, his first wife, is said to have remarked to him as he danced her on his knee, "Robert have done with that; I had rather be Treated than trotted," and so brought him, at long last, to the point of proposing. He was the most able and versatile man of the Newark founders; surveyor, magistrate, and member of the Assembly of the Colony; he was induced to return to Connecticut in 1672 where he served for 30 years as Deputy Governor and as Governor.

AFTER the return of Captain Treat to Connecticut, the leading man of Newark, next to the pastor, was Jasper Crane, one of the oldest settlers from Branford. His home lot is marked by a tablet at St. Philip's Episcopal church, and the corner of

High and West Market streets where the church now stands was the starting point of the Old Crane Road to the settlements on the mountain. So many of his descendants lived in what is now called Montclair Center that it was named Crane Town. A deputy in the General Assembly of the colony and moderator of Newark Town Meeting, in the words of the Schoolman's Club Tablet "He gave of his ripe wisdom" and tireless energy that Newark might be a better place in which to live." His son Azariah married Robert Treat's daughter, and was the owner of the tan yard near the Frog Pond. Many are the people in Newark, the Oranges, and Montclair, who trace their ancestry to Jasper Crane.

The descendants of pastor Abraham Pierson are also numerous. His son Abraham, Junior, a graduate of Harvard, was called to be assistant pastor at Newark, and pastor after the father's death. Inheriting his father's unusually valuable (for those days) library of 440 books which he loaned to the mem-

bers of Old First Church he took it with him when he left Newark for a pastorate at Killingworth, near New Haven. When he became Rector of the newly-founded Yale College (the title later became that of President) he probably contributed these books to the college library. Thus Newark, receiving from the New Haven colony the sturdy settlers who planted our towns on the Passaic, returned to Connecticut two of its leading citizens—Robert Treat, to become one of its most able governors, and Abraham Pierson Jr., to become its first college president.

The relations between Newark-on-the-Passaic and Newark-on-Trent have been equally cordial. The tradition that the New Jersey city received its name from the one in England has been recognized by the officials of both, and greetings have passed between their mayors, especially at the time of Newark's 250th anniversary in 1914. During World War II Mayor Vincent J. Murphy of Newark sent greetings to the Mayor of Newark-on-Trent and a message of sympathy for the trials suffered by the English as a result of the air attacks early in the war.



Ruined walls of Newark Castle (right) still stand on a branch of the Trent. Newark-on-Trent, where Dr. Pierson preached, is in Nottinghamshire, not far from Nottingham and Sherwood Forest where Robin Hood lived.

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